

Lower Manhattan Elected Officials Urge Homeland Security to Conduct Park Row Study

Thursday, 17 June 2010

NEW YORK, N.Y. - Today, Congressman Jerrold Nadler, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, State Senator Daniel Squadron, Borough President Scott Stringer, and City Councilmember Margaret Chin sent a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano requesting intervention in the long overdue reopening of Park Row in Lower Manhattan. The legislators are asking Secretary Napolitano to conduct a risk and security assessment of Park Row, a street which has been closed since September 11, 2001 because of its proximity to Police Plaza. The letter is in follow up to a May meeting convened by the Chinatown Working Group with U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood in which LaHood offered his support in enlisting the federal government to look into the closure. For years, the Chinatown community and its elected officials have pushed for Park Row's reopening.

"After nine years of living with the inconvenience of Park Row's closure, we are hopeful that Chinatown residents will not have to maintain the status quo indefinitely," said Congressman Jerrold Nadler. "Having enlisted the support of Transportation Secretary LaHood, we are calling on Homeland Security to conduct an independent assessment that could finally pave the way for returning Park Row to the community. If Park Row cannot be reopened, then let Homeland Security weigh in on why the security risks are too great. I strongly believe that we can achieve equilibrium between security and the needs of the local community."

"Residents who live on Park Row have been inconvenienced for far too long," said Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver. "Local businesses have suffered because this important link between Chinatown and the Financial District has been cut off, isolating the neighborhoods from one another. I believe there is a safe and responsible way to reopen Park Row, as we have done with so many other streets shut down after 9/11. I would welcome a visit from the Department of Homeland Security and I look forward to the day our neighborhood can get its street back."

"Park Row is a vitally important artery for Chinatown and all of Lower Manhattan, and its closure continues to have harsh consequences for residents, businesses and the entire community," said State Senator Daniel Squadron. "That's why I urge the Department of Homeland Security to assess the security situation on Park Row - an important step toward getting it reopened as soon as possible."

"The closure of Park Row has impeded the revitalization of Chinatown and Lower Manhattan," said Borough President Scott Stringer. "It's time the residents and business owners had a better understanding of if and when this street will be returned to the community. I want to join my colleagues in urging Secretary Napolitano to conduct this assessment, so that we can better evaluate how to reopen Park Row and move the community forward."

"For too long, residents of Chinatown and Lower Manhattan have waited for evidence - any evidence - that this essential thoroughfare needs to remain closed," said Council Member Margaret Chin. "And for too long, members of our community have had to live with the consequences: traffic congestion, fewer parking opportunities, and check points in front of their homes. The time for a serious risk assessment of Park Row is long overdue. I urge Secretary Napolitano to quickly conduct a risk assessment of this vital thoroughfare that once was the lifeblood of Lower Manhattan. I look forward to their findings and hope to re-open Park Row as soon as possible."

The text of the letter can be viewed as a pdf [here](#) and below:

June 17, 2010

Janet Napolitano

Secretary

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

301 7th Street, SW

Washington, DC 20528-0150

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

Last month, Transportation Secretary LaHood attended a meeting of the Chinatown Working Group, a community-based planning initiative that supports the Chinatown community in Lower Manhattan. As the elected officials representing the Lower Manhattan community, we are writing to follow up on a request you should have received from Secretary LaHood as a result of that meeting, asking that the Department of Homeland Security conduct a risk/security assessment of a transportation issue in Lower Manhattan. The issue concerns the closure of Park Row, a vital thoroughfare for the residents of our district. As you may know, this street, which connects two important neighborhoods, Chinatown and the Financial District, has been closed since the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001.

While we understand the security concerns of the NYPD, whose headquarters are nearby, this closure has brought significant hardship for residents. Those with cars who live on these blocks have had to show ID to get home, businesses have been negatively impacted because of the decrease in traffic, and many who relied on Park Row as a means to travel between Chinatown and the Financial District have been inconvenienced.

While so many other streets that were closed after 9/11 have since reopened - including those around the federal courthouse in Manhattan, and even those surrounding the White House and the U.S. Capitol in Washington - this key roadway has been an unfortunate exception.

We believe it would be enormously helpful if the Department of Homeland Security could lead a risk/security assessment of the necessity of the Park Row closure with local law enforcement agencies to help us determine how this street can be safely reopened. We are requesting a meeting with your agency and the community in order to discuss our concerns and next steps in this process.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Our offices remain ready to assist you in any way they can.

Sincerely,

Congressman Jerrold Nadler

Assemblyman Sheldon Silver

State Senator Daniel Squadron

Borough President Scott Stringer

Councilmember Margaret Chin

